

Work-Life-Conflict and Work-life-Balance – A conceptual Approach

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Abstract

Work-life-Balance has important consequences for employee attitudes towards their organizations as well as for the lives of employees. Work-life-conflict occurs when the burden, obligations and responsibilities of work and family roles become incompatible. The most common example of work-family conflict occurs when the time demands of one role to make it difficult to meet the time demands of another role or when one schedule directly interferes with another. Changing societal trends such as an increase in the number of women entering the work force combined with an economy that required dual income support an average standard of living contribute to work life conflict. There is need to optimize happiness in life by a balance between work life and enjoyment excess of one beyond point diminishes the other. Work-Life-Balance is about proper understanding of the priorities of professional and personal level. Work-Life-Balance is not merely related to work and life; it is a positive state of mind. It is about the interaction between paid work and other activities, unpaid work in families and community, leisure and personal development.

Work-life-Balance is important to individuals, organizations and the society at large. There is need to optimize happiness in life by a fine balance between life enjoyment and work. Work-life-Balance has important consequences for employee attitudes towards their organizations as well as for the lives of employees. Work-life-conflict occurs when the burden, obligations and responsibilities of work and family roles become incompatible.

Work-Life-Conflict – Causes and consequences

Work-Life (Family) Conflict refers to simultaneous pressures from the work and family domains that are mutually incompatible. Meeting the demands of one role makes it difficult to meet the demands of the other role. The most common example of work-family conflict occurs when the time demands of one role to make it difficult to meet the time demands of another role or when one schedule directly interferes with another. Changing societal trends such as an increase in the number of women entering the work force combined with an economy that required dual income support an average standard of living contribute to work life conflict.

Of all the job factors that influence work-life-conflicts the amount of time spent at work is the strongest and most consistent predictor. The higher levels of work-to-family conflict reported by managers or professionals often are a function of their longer work hours. Other reasons include (Melisa Abercromby-2017).

- Job security
- Support from one's superior
- Support from co-workers
- Work demands or overload
- Work-role conflict
- Work-role ambiguity
- Job dissatisfaction
- Extensive use of communication technology that blurs the boundaries between home and work.

The problem of work-life-conflict is increasing over time due to;

- High female labour force participation rates
- Increasing number of single parent family
- Predominance of dual earner family and
- Emerging trends such as elder care

Today's workers have many competing responsibilities such as work, children housework, volunteering, spouse and elderly parent care – This places stress on individuals, families and communities in which they reside. Work-life-conflict is a serious problem that impacts workers, their employers and communities. Greenhouse J and Singh L (2003) have given an over view of different sources of work-family-conflict that can be categorized into three categories viz.

- Home demands
 - Work demands and
 - Self-imposed demands
1. Home demands occur due to sources like having small children, large families, number of hours the spouse works a week conflicts within the family or disagreement about family roles.
 2. Work demands include ambiguity or conflict within the work role, work load inflexibility of work schedule, career stage, low task challenges/ variety/ importance and high task autonomy.
 3. Self imposed demands refer to the expectations that a person imposes on his or her own. They occur from the person itself. They include perfectionism, work aholism and over achievement drive. Result of this self imposed demand is a feeling of guilt, which occurs if one cannot live up to ones own expectations.

Work-Life-Balance – concept and policies

In view of the work-life-conflict situations affecting employees, employers and the family of the workers need for adopting policies for a work-life-balance is felt by the employers. They are becoming increasingly aware of the cost implications associated with over worked employees such as operating and productivity costs, absenteeism punctuality, commitment and performance. There are five main reasons why companies participate in work life balance Programs; high return on investment recruitment, and retention of employees, legislation costs and union regulations (Melisa Abercromby-2007).

The concept of work life balance (WLB) was first used in United Kingdom in the late 1970s to describe the balance between individuals work and his personal life. In the united states this phrase was first used in

1986 in reaction to the unhealthy choices that many Americans were making in favour of work place as they opted to neglect family, friends and leisure activities in the pursuit of corporate work goals.

The Concept of Work-Life-Balance

In simple terms 'work' is normally conceived of in this context as including paid employment "life" includes activities outside work. Work is a matter of necessity and survival. Work is classified into physical and mental work. Mental work has increased substantially compared to physical work which is felt due to Information Technology. In an intense competitive work environment long-term loyalty and a sense of corporate community have eroded by performance culture that expects more and more from employees.

Balance is reported where equal weight is given to both work and home activities. However balance may also be reported when home or work dominates by choice. Clark (2000) defines balance as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict.

Work-Life-Balance is defined as the satisfaction and good balance between professional and personal life with a minimum role conflict (Desrochers and Sergeant-2004). The concept of work life balance is based on the individuals who are equally involved in and are equally satisfied with their work role and family role and by giving equal priority to both roles. Work life balance is conceived as the relationship between the institutional and cultural times and spaces of work and non-work in societies where income predominantly generated and distributed through labour markets (Gregory and Milner 2009). Work life balance is perceived as the extent to which an individual is equally self engaged and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role (Greenhaves Colin and show 2003).

Three major types of Work-Life-Balance initiatives have been mentioned namely flexible work options, specialized leave policies and dependent care benefits (McDonald et al 2005) Work-Life-Balance is about proper understanding of the priorities of professional and personal level. Work-Life-Balance is not merely related to work and life; it is a positive state of mind. It is about the interaction between paid work and other activities, unpaid work in families and community, leisure and personal development.

Work-Life-Balance Policies and Business performance

Business performance is affected by Work-Life-Balance policies in a number of ways. In a competitive labour market employers can attract better recruits by offering Work-Life-Balance policies alongside competitive remuneration packages. The Work-Life-Balance policies can improve staff retention rates. Work-Life-Balance policies can enhance productivity and can minimize stress and contribute to a safer and healthier workplace by combating fatigue thus reducing the chance of accidents occurring in the work place.

Work-Life-Balance Strategies for employers and employees

The benefits of Work-Life-Balance can be obtained through proper strategies by employers and the employees.

Employers strategies for Work-Life-Balance

1. Flexibility: Empowering employees to have options on work arrangements that best suit their life style. This may include working from home flexitime, job-sharing or leave options.
2. Training – Empowering employees through practical training to ensure they know how to manage work load and stress.
3. Resilience – make resilience a priority for employees and hold them accountable for maintaining and building their own personal resilience levels. Resilience resources are linked to better health and well being and also organizational productivity.

4. Life style program – Providing employees with a health and wellness allowance that contributes to the cost of engaging in physical activity is a great way to ensure this important life style factor a priority.

Employees strategies for Work-Life-Balance

Following strategies can help employees in maintaining Work-Life-Balance .

1. Establish a Replenishing Inner ‘State home’. Some employees do not feel the energetic involvement of real work. Others do brilliant inspired work without ever leaving their bed. This is because both work and home are first and foremost states of mind, so begin separating your working life and home life. This way we can concentrate creating a mental state of home inside your head.
2. Establish a productive inner ‘State of work’. You must create a mental work state more life ‘flow’.
3. Use your mental state to create physical spaces. Create a physical environment that support each side to keep your your and home healthy and pristine.
4. Separate your homes pace from your work space.
5. Actually use your home space and work space. The more time you spend doing only home things in your homespace and only working in your workspace the more you will develop the state dependent memory that will trigger the associations you want in either place.
6. Watch the Zen master in your emerge love going to work and love being home just not at the same time.

Conclusion:

An effective work life balance is essential for ensuring high productivity and to achieve individual and organization goal. An organization should follow a systematic process of keeping their view and the mission for smooth flow of work life and employees. There is need to optimize happiness in life by a balance between work life and enjoyment excess of one beyond point diminishes the other.

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